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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Federacion de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[04 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Please recycle

Torture, cruel and inhumane punishment/treatment of Saharawi population by the Moroccan authorities

The Moroccan occupying forces resort to torture and cruel and inhumane treatment on a daily basis to repress the Saharawi population in the occupied territories of Western Sahara. Torture is on-going and has not diminished, nor is it prevented by the presence of the United Nations Mission.

Hundreds of complaints have been presented to denounce the gross violations committed by the Moroccan authorities and are well documented.

Peaceful protesters are brutally beaten. These beatings have resulted in some cases, like the one of Miss Sultana Khaya, in the loss of an eye that was "removed" by a baton with nails. The Moroccan authorities aim the sensible parts of the body intentionally. When Saharawi are arrested or abducted the torture is even worse with beatings, sleep depravation, forced kneeling, hanging by the feet or hands for hours, group torture and sexual molestation, amongst others.

Children are also targeted as a way to intimidate and ingrain fear in them. This happens in the school where they are beaten, called 'dirty Saharawi, and humiliated by the teachers and employees.

Police officers in plain clothes are sometimes present in the school yards they threaten Saharawi children with rape and sexually assault the girls.
The children do not sleep well; they have nightmares, and are afraid to be "taken in the night". Night raids into Saharawi houses are frequent and children witness torture of their family members as well as their abductions.

There are dozens of reports of children that were severely beaten and tortured by the police, in the middle of the street or in the outskirts of the cities where they are taken by force, without apparent reason.

Mahmoud (13) was coming home from school when 4 police cars stopped. The agents got out and started beating him. His sister (12) heard him and came running, but the police threw stones at her. He was beaten senseless with a bar, hands and batons as well as being kicked. When he could no longer move they dragged him off his feet and threw him to the floor repeatedly. Then he put his arm to protect his head and they broke his arm. Eventually they left him in the street.
Mahmoud was "operated" twice. The first time the doctor put a metal plate in his arm but it had to be removed again. The second "surgery" was the removal of the metal plate without any anaesthesia or painkiller. The doctors opened his arm with a knife and took out the metal plate. "I only saw blood and it hurt horribly" said Mahmoud.

Inside the hospital of Laayoune, police agents and auxiliary forces are present, sometimes even during surgery, forbidding the use of anaesthesia when the patient is a Saharawi activist.

Torture is on-going and is used to obtain confessions but also to "subdue" and "re-educate" Saharawi political prisoners, as well as a common practice whenever prisoners are transferred from one prison to another.

Torture is denounced not only by former political prisoners, they also frequently feature in the reports of observers of trials where prisoners denounce torture and demand medical examinations during the trial to the judge; however, these claims are never investigated

The reported torture methods include:

- 'Airplane' - Victims are forced to bend over while standing with their legs straight. The person's head is bent down until it cannot go down any further, while the hands are pulled up and held up to the highest point. The hips have to point upwards.
- Beatings
- Burning with cigarettes

- Chemical burns
- Chemical inhalation
- Removal of finger and toe nails
- Light deprivation
- Pretend Drowning
- Electrocution
- Whipping of feet
- Force -feeding
- Hanging by the feet
- Mutilation
- Oxygen deprivation
- Rape/sexual assault
- Roasted Chicken - victim is suspended from a pole or spit
- Sodomy with sharp objects such as broken bottles, iron rods, legs of chairs
- Solitary confinement
- Sleep deprivation
- Starvation
- Strappado/squassation (also known as reverse hanging and Palestinian hanging)
- Stress positions
- Sweden drink - ingestion of urine and faeces
- Ta'liq - hanging from a metal bar
- Waterboarding

The use of torture to subdue and intimidate the Saharawi in the occupied territories is known and public, it is urgent that the International Community and the United Nations take a stand to protect the Saharawi population and implement the approved resolutions, namely the referendum of self-determination, putting and end to the on-going massacre and violation of the most basic human rights.